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On the Front Line of Statewide Medical Care

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Blue Springs, MO — Missouri is leading the way in securing the best possible care for patients suffering strokes or heart attacks.

With the signature of Governor Matt Blunt to House Bill 1790 last month, Missouri became the first state in the nation enacting legislation creating a “time critical diagnosis system” for patients suffering from stroke or ST-elevation myocardial infarction, a particularly fatal type of heart attack.



STEMIs are caused by a blockage in the coronary artery that is preventing blood from flowing to the heart.

The muscle becomes starved for oxygen and eventually dies. The sooner the coronary artery is opened, the more heart muscle can be saved. Research has shown that the best treatment is immediate balloon angioplasty. In fact, the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association guidelines set a “door-to-balloon” time goal of 90 minutes or less.

Not all hospitals are equipped to meet that goal. The new legislation means people suffering from STEMIs will be transported to the closest hospital with a cardiac catheterization lab and a team ready to treat the patients – not simply to the nearest hospital. Missouri currently uses such a system for severely injured patients.

They are taken directly to a hospital with a trauma center designation.

The Health Department of Missouri has already been preparing the state to implement a system of stroke and STEMI centers and St. Mary's Medical Center has already been established as a STEMI center.

The Cardiac Catheterization Lab at St. Mary's provides 24-hour coverage, seven days a week for emergent cardiac conditions including patients suffering from a STEMI.

Many people think of a heart attack as a sudden, intense pain.

But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain and discomfort. It's very important not to ignore that pain in your chest, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, or pain in your arms,

back, neck or jaw. Calling 9-1-1 is the best path to treatment.

It means you will be taken to a STEMI center – to a facility equipped and trained to provide the best treatment.

Establishing a STEMI center has required a major commitment from St. Mary's Medical Center and the physicians of Kansas City Cardiology Associates.

It requires a coordinated effort from several groups including cardiologists, Emergency physicians, nursing, cardiac catheterization lab staff and paramedics transporting patients by ambulance. Setting the standards throughout the state means Missourians will get the best treatment for their conditions.

As Medical Director for St. Mary's Heart Center, I am proud of the hard work and dedication all members of this team have exhibited in providing this level of service to the community.